# Report on the 2007 City of Snoqualmie Citizen Survey

Submitted by Janet Salm, Consultant May 1, 2007

### Introduction

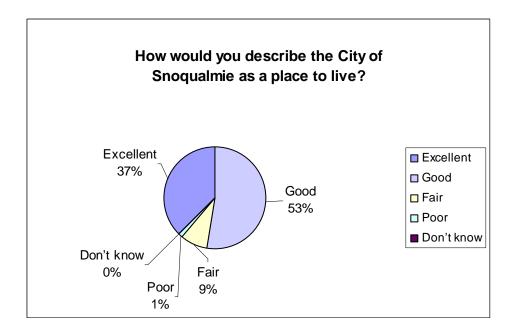
The City of Snoqualmie Community mailed a Citizen Survey to 2,678 households in Snoqualmie on March 8, with a deadline of March 26, 2007. The anonymous surveys were completed and returned to the City by mail via pre-paid envelopes. A total of 837 responses were received, and while some surveys were received after the deadline, the City Council felt it was important to take into account all responses, so all surveys were read and tallied. A total of 837 surveys were returned and included in the analysis for a response rate of 31%.

A summary of full results is included in the appendix to this report and complete text of all openended responses was provided to the City Council for review.

#### **Survey Highlights**

People are very satisfied with living in the City of Snoqualmie.

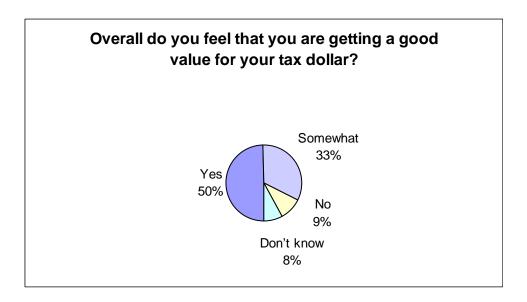
Survey results show that 90% of respondents describe Snoqualmie as an "excellent" or "good" place to live.



People feel they get their money's worth for their Snoqualmie tax dollar.

Fifty percent (50%) of respondents feel they are getting their money's worth for their tax dollar. This is in stark contrast to the results of the last survey, conducted in August 2004, when only 25% of respondents said they felt they were getting their money's worth. Additionally, the

percentage of respondents saying that they are not getting their money's worth went down from 34% in 2004 to 9% in 2007.



#### *Emergency Services in Snoqualmie are excellent.*

More than 90% of survey respondents who expressed an opinion gave a "good" or "excellent" rating on the quality of emergency services in the City of Snoqualmie:

- Fire Services responding to calls
- Fire services providing emergency medical services
- Police responding to citizen calls.

# City Services rate very highly with citizens.

The survey asked residents to rate seven departments' services – Arts & Culture, Planning & Development, Fire Services, Parks & Recreation, Police Services, Public Works and General City Services. On 30 of the 35 individual measures, over half of respondents gave a "good" or "excellent" rating to the services.

On many measures (14 measures), ratings were even higher, with over 70% of citizens who expressed an opinion rating the services "good" or "excellent." In addition to the fire and police ratings above, the measures with over 70% positive ratings include:

- Planning & Development: preserving historic buildings (70%)
- Fire Services: preventing fires through education (81%) or safety inspections (85%) and providing emergency management planning (81%).
- Parks & Recreation: maintaining existing parks (79%) and preserving open space and natural areas (71%)
- Police Services: investigating and solving crimes (83%), enforcing traffic & parking laws (72%) and bringing drug and alcohol awareness programs to the schools (70%)
- Public works: keeping the streets clean / street sweeping (78%) and landscaping streets (73%)
- General City Services: providing accurate utility billing (75%), communicating with citizens / newsletters, water bill inserts, email distribution list (72%) and satisfying requests for information (71%).

#### *The City of Snoqualmie has some areas for improvement.*

In only five areas measured do the services provided by the City appear to be falling short of expectations, with 50% or more of those respondents who express an opinion saying that services are "fair" or "poor:"

- Parks and Recreation: providing adult recreation programs (67%) and providing senior programs (62%)
- Arts & Culture: hosting community events (65%)
- Planning & Development: providing affordable housing (61%) and ensuring well-planned growth (54%)

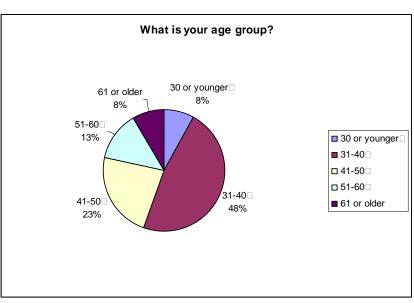
# Snoqualmie's citizens care.

In addition to a very high response rate, it was clear that citizens had taken time to carefully consider the survey, and to provide thoughtful rankings and detailed and constructive feedback and suggestions. The response rate of 31 percent is very high and responses were almost universally constructive. Summaries of detailed comments are provided below, and it is highly recommended that City Council members take time to read through individual suggestions and feedback provided.

# **Respondent Demographics**

A series of demographic questions were asked to help understand the demographics of Snoqualmie's survey respondents. These results might be compared to the most recent demographic data for Snoqualmie to assess whether survey respondents are representative of the population as a whole.

In addition to their age (see chart at right), respondents were asked how long they've lived in Snoqualmie. Most respondents have lived in Snoqualmie 10 years or less, with 45% reporting living here for less than 5 years, and 39% for 5-10 years. Seventeen percent of respondents have lived in Snoqualmie for more than 11 years (with 9.4% over 26 years, and 7.2% over 11 years).



A remarkable 98% of survey respondents have Internet access at home, and 57% have visited the City's website in the last 6 months. A number of written comments said the survey was the first time they'd heard about the City's website, and they plan to visit in the future.

# **Report Card on City Services**

Respondents were asked to rate a variety of City operations and services, and results for each are summarized below. The five rating categories are combined for ease of analysis. The positive ratings (excellent and good) and negative ratings (fair and poor) are added together to provide a snapshot of what's generally working well and what needs work, respectively. Note: while the ratings have been reported for only those responses who expressed an opinion, the "no opinion" column below represents the total percentage of respondents.

feel we are at providing the following services:	Service Ratings. The next section lists services provided by the city. Please rate how effective you
	feel we are at providing the following services:

	Good +	Fair +	% no
Arthur and Outhough Decoupous Construction	Excellent	Poor	opinion
Arts and Cultural Programs - Community arts	35%	65%	39%
Arts and Cultural Programs - Hosting community events	52%	48%	25%
Planning & Development - Ensuring well planned growth	46%	<mark>54%</mark>	10%
Planning & Development - Enforcing code requirements	58%	42%	27%
Planning & Development - Permit services for land use etc	60%	40%	48%
Planning & Development - Preserving historic buildings	70%	30%	28%
Planning & Development - Promoting affordable housing	39%	61%	27%
Fire Services - Preventing fires with safety inspections	85%	15%	53%
Fire Services - Responding to fires	94%	6%	43%
Fire Services - Providing emergency medical services	91%	9%	34%
Fire Services - Providing emergency management planning	79%	21%	37%
Fire Services - Preventing fires through education	81%	19%	50%
Parks and Recreation - Providing youth recreation programs	55%	45%	32%
Parks and Recreation - Providing adult recreation programs	33%	67%_	37%
Parks and Recreation - Providing senior programs	38%	62%	59%
Parks and Recreation - Maintaining existing parks	79%	21%	6%
Parks and Recreation - Preserving open space and nature	71%	29%	9%
Police Services - Responding to citizen calls	90%	10%	29%
Police Services - Investigating and solving crimes	83%	17%	53%
Police Services - Enforcing traffic and parking laws	72%	28%	19%
Police Services - Drug and alcohol awareness to schools	70%	30%	63%
Police Services - Working with citizen groups to prevent crime	62%	38%	55%
Public Works - Providing flood control programs and projects	63%	37%	38%
Public Works - Maintaining city streets and sidewalks	69%	31%	4%
Public Works - Repairing potholes	65%	35%	12%
Public Works - Keeping the streets clean (street sweeping)	78%	22%	2%
Public Works - Improving traffic circulation	66%	34%	17%
Public Works - Making improvements for pedestrians & bikes	68%	32%	16%
Public Works - Providing more parking downtown	54%	46%	26%
Public Works - Landscaping streets	73%	27%	8%
General City Services - Providing accurate utility billing	75%	25%	7%
General City Services - Communicating with citizens	72%	28%	4%
General City Services - Providing citizens budget/financial info.	61%	39%	16%
General City Services - Constructing & repairing city facilities	69%	31%	34%
General City Services - Satisfying requests for information	71%	29%	40%

#### LEGEND

**Blue** = Extremely positive ratings, 90% or more giving a rating of "excellent" or "good."

Green = Strongly positive rating, with 70% or more of those expressing an opinion giving a rating of "excellent" or "good."

**Red** = Strongly negative rating, with 50% or more giving a rating of "fair" or "poor."

**Bold** = 50% or more of respondents said they have "no opinion" which may indicate that awareness of a service is low.

#### **Findings on Satisfaction with City Services**

The Report Card above provides a snapshot on how Snoqualmie citizens rate their City's services. Below are the summary findings on the highest and lowest rated services. Detailed findings for each of the seven service areas are presented following the summary, combining individual measures with open-ended feedback. Survey respondents were asked to provide specific information for any areas they marked "poor" in an open-ended style question, and all remarks were transcribed and analyzed for content. A total of 369 individual responses were transcribed and are summarized below as they pertain to each area. Please note: comments were not limited to explanations of poor ratings, but rather tended to express suggestions or ideas or explain details for any level of rating.

### The Highest Ratings

More than 90% of survey respondents expressing an opinion gave a "good" or "excellent" rating on the quality of emergency services in the City of Snoqualmie:

- Fire Services responding to calls.
- Fire services providing emergency medical services.
- Police responding to citizen calls.

### Fourteen Service Areas Rated "Good" or "Excellent by More than 70% of Respondents

- Planning & Development: preserving historic buildings (70%).
- Fire Services: preventing fires through education (81%) or safety inspections (85%) and providing emergency management planning (81%).
- Parks & Recreation: maintaining existing parks (79%) and preserving open space and natural areas (71%).
- Police Services: investigating and solving crimes (83%), enforcing traffic & parking laws (72%) and bringing drug and alcohol awareness programs to the schools (70%).
- Public works: keeping the streets clean / street sweeping (78%) and landscaping streets (73%).
- General City Services: providing accurate utility billing (75%), communicating with citizens / newsletters, water bill inserts, email distribution list (72%) and satisfying requests for information (71%).

#### Lowest Rankings

In 5 areas, 50% or more of respondents gave a "fair" or "poor" rating:

- Parks and Recreation: providing adult recreation programs (67%) and providing senior programs (62%).
- Arts & Culture: hosting community events (65%).
- Planning & Development: providing affordable housing (61%) and ensuring well-planned growth (54%).

# "No Opinion" Rankings

Areas where 50% or more of respondents gave "no opinion" may be areas that require more education and awareness efforts on the part of the City.

- Fire prevention through safety inspections or education.
- Police: investigating and solving crimes, crime prevention through working with citizen groups, bringing drug and alcohol awareness to schools.
- Parks and recreation: providing senior programs

For example, prevention efforts by fire and police services are logical areas where citizens may be less likely to encounter or notice services ("people can't notice what didn't happen"). Notably, for both of these areas, for those who did express an opinion, the fire and police services were rated very well (see Report Card above). In contrast, the 59% of respondents who say they have "no opinion" on the City's efforts to provide senior programs appears to be related to a lack of existing services. A number of people commented that there are no services, so they can't express an opinion. Also, of those who rated services for seniors, 62% say those services are "fair or poor."

#### **Arts and Culture**

		Good +		Fair +	% no
	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor	opinion
Arts and Cultural Programs - Community arts	4%	35%	28%	<mark>65%</mark>	39%
Arts and Cultural Programs - Hosting community events	9%	52%	13%	48%	25%

Open-ended responses centered around wanting to see more community events, and creating a vibrant downtown area with events to attract tourism. Other comments were about enjoying Railroad Days and a few other community programs, but many comments pertained to these events being underattended or underutilized.

#### **Planning & Development**

		Good +		Fair +	% no	
	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor	opinion	
Planning & Development - Ensuring well planned growth	7%	46%	22%	54%	10%	
Planning & Development - Enforcing code requirements	8%	58%	16%	42%	27%	
Planning & Development - Permit services for land use etc	6%	60%	15%	40%	48%	
Planning & Development - Preserving historic buildings	11%	70%	7%	30%	28%	
Planning & Development - Promoting affordable housing	6%	39%	24%	61%	27%	

One of the most consistent findings was that the City is doing a good job of preserving historic buildings (70%). At the same time, a majority feels that the City is doing only a fair or poor job of promoting affordable housing.

On the open-ended responses, many responses related to a perceived split in the community between the older downtown and newer Ridge area. Comments reflected two distinct schools of thought – either find a way to combine the two better or split them up completely. Respondents voiced a lot of frustration around ensuring well-planned growth. Schools, while not part of the City of Snoqualmie, are perceived as belonging to the City and many comments related to schools being overcrowded and underfunded due to poor planning with the growth of the area.

In terms of enforcing code and permitting, many comments were related to wanting to charge more to developers in fees and mitigation costs, and concerns that not enough is being enforced with the developers or that the City is being taken advantage of.

#### **Police Services**

	Excellent	Good + Excellent	Poor	Fair + Poor	% no opinion
Police Services - Responding to citizen calls	43%	90%	2%	10%	29%
Police Services - Investigating and solving crimes	29%	83%	5%	17%	53%
Police Services - Enforcing traffic and parking laws	23%	72%	11%	28%	19%
Police Services - Drug and alcohol awareness to schools	22%	70%	8%	30%	63%
Police Services - Working with citizen groups to prevent crime	19%	62%	15%	38%	55%

In terms of investigating and solving crimes, most people said they had "no opinion," most likely due to few personal experiences with this aspect of policing. Additionally, prevention efforts do not appear to be highly visible to citizens. These may be areas for the City to promote more awareness of its efforts. As reported above, citizens rate police emergency response extremely highly, and of those who expressed an opinion, 90% said the police have been good or excellent at responding to citizen calls, and only nine people total reported the police being "poor" at responding.

In contrast, many respondents think that the police are doing only a fair or poor job of enforcing traffic and parking laws, and most of the comments related to this area pertained to the many missed opportunities for enforcing traffic and parking laws, which was also mentioned often as one way for the City to increase revenue.

In the open-ended responses, some respondents suggested outsourcing this service or combining services with other local municipalities. But others specifically asked to see more police in the community or to preserve local policing. One comment related to an outstanding contract for police, and said "just sign it even if you have to raise my taxes." Many people mentioned parking enforcement being lax for parking in "no parking" spaces, parking in the wrong direction, and there were numerous mentions of cars that have been parked too long or abandoned. A few of the same intersections were mentioned multiple times, where traffic laws could be better enforced to make those areas safer. There were a number of requests for a citizen neighborhood crime watch in local neighborhoods to create a better sense of community.

#### **Fire Services**

		Good +		Fair +	% no
	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor	opinion
Fire Services - Preventing fires with safety inspections	26%	85%	4%	15%	53%
Fire Services - Responding to fires	40%	94%	1%	6%	43%
Fire Services - Providing emergency medical services	42%	91%	2%	9%	34%
Fire Services - Providing emergency management planning	28%	79%	7%	21%	37%
Fire Services - Preventing fires through education	25%	81%	6%	19%	50%

For Fire Services, as for Police Services, respondents expressing an opinion, over 90% rating the response to fires and emergency medical services "excellent" or "good." Citizens were likely to have "no opinion" about prevention efforts, which is likely due to low awareness of prevention efforts. As above, there were some suggestions that Snoqualmie share fire, police and other services with other local municipalities.

#### **Parks and Recreation**

	Excellent	Good + Excellent	Poor	Fair + Poor	% no opinion
Parks and Recreation - Providing youth recreation programs	13%	55%	17%	45%	32%
Parks and Recreation - Providing adult recreation programs	6%	33%	30%	67%	37%
Parks and Recreation - Providing senior programs	9%	38%	27%	62%	59%
Parks and Recreation - Maintaining existing parks	24%	79%	4%	21%	6%
Parks and Recreation - Preserving open space and nature	21%	71%	10%	29%	9%

As can be seen in the chart above, some services provided by Parks and Recreation are quite popular, where other services need strengthening, according to survey respondents. On maintaining parks, some open-ended responses specifically said there are not enough parks, while others said there are too many parks. On preserving open space and natural areas, one clearly prevalent opinion is that there's been too much development, and not enough appreciation for the land and natural beauty of the area.

Citizens overwhelmingly report wanting to see more youth, adult and senior programs – regardless of the age of the respondent. Many comments were related to worries that teenagers don't have a place to go or activities to keep them out of trouble.

#### **Public Works**

	Freedlant	Good +	Daan	Fair +	% no
	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor	opinion
Public Works - Providing flood control programs and projects	12%	63%	15%	37%	38%
Public Works - Maintaining city streets and sidewalks	17%	69%	9%	31%	4%
Public Works - Repairing potholes	11%	65%	11%	35%	12%
Public Works - Keeping the streets clean (street sweeping)	32%	78%	6%	22%	2%
Public Works - Improving traffic circulation	14%	66%	8%	34%	17%
Public Works - Making improvements for pedestrians & bikes	18%	68%	10%	32%	16%
Public Works - Providing more parking downtown	11%	54%	14%	46%	26%
Public Works - Landscaping streets	23%	73%	7%	27%	8%

Snoqualmie residents had a lot to say about streets and sidewalks. The same streets that are poorly maintained are mentioned multiple times, and most of them mentioned seem to be downtown. Railroad Avenue was especially mentioned as needing improvement. On street sweeping there were two differing sets of comments – some complained that their street was missed; others specifically thanked the City for doing a great job. On landscaping streets, responses either mentioned that the Ridge looks good or that downtown needs more upkeep. Citizens would like to see the area become even more bike and pedestrian friendly - Ridge Parkway was specifically mentioned as being not very pedestrian friendly. People would like to get out and walk, but don't feel it's very safe, or that there's not enough room for bicycles on the main throughways.

Improving traffic circulation – same intersections come up multiple times, like needing lights or stop signs at Ridge Parkway and Douglas Avenue and others. People want to see more parking downtown, especially if there's any further expansion of the downtown business district.

Comments on flood control were as variable as the ratings above (63% positive, 37% negative), and perceptions appear to be based on the most recent experience of flooding – very good, or very poor, depending on location. Some comments related to feeling well taken care of, but many said they felt they didn't know anything about prevention, weren't checked on or weren't communicated with during the flooding. Both groups appear to agree that there could be more prevention and communications about what to do in case of flood before it happens again.

# **General City Services**

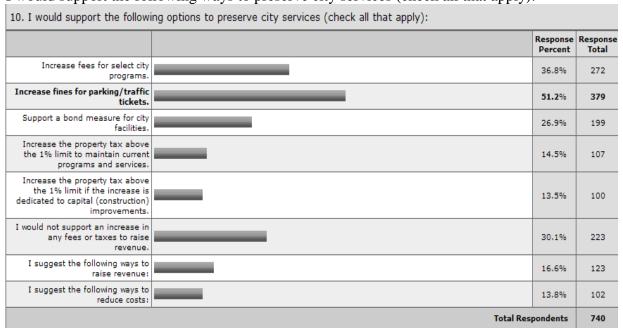
		Good +		Fair +	% no
	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor	opinion
General City Services - Providing accurate utility billing	17%	75%	6%	25%	7%
General City Services - Communicating with citizens	22%	72%	6%	28%	4%
General City Services - Providing citizens budget/financial info.	13%	61%	10%	39%	16%
General City Services - Constructing & repairing city facilities	13%	69%	5%	31%	34%
General City Services - Satisfying requests for information	19%	71%	8%	29%	40%

All general city services received strongly positive ratings, averaging about 70% "good" or "excellent." Suggestions from the open-ended comments included that many people would like to see e-billing so they can pay all of their bills online. In terms of communications, many would like to see more, especially about volunteer opportunities, what's going on, and information about town meetings. A number of people said they emailed someone at the city and got no replies – not even a standardized auto response. Areas mentioned for more communication efforts include: more info about the pool and community center – especially about the plans and budgets. And in general, they want to know what the plans are for growth for the community. Many people mentioned that they were unaware of the city's website until this survey and would visit it now that they know.

### **Feedback for City Council**

The survey asked citizens what measures they would support to preserve City services, and they were asked to provide suggestions as to how they think the City could increase revenue and cut costs. Here's what they said:

I would support the following ways to preserve city services (check all that apply):



# *Ways to increase revenue (n=123 responses)*

The overwhelming response? To increase revenue, bring in more business. People also suggested:

- Clean up downtown.
- Have more or higher user fees.
- Enforce laws on the books, especially traffic and parking laws.
- Charge developers proper and fair permit fees for building, or raise building permit fees / mitigation fees.
- Create community days like "Bite of Seattle" to create community and bring in tourist dollars.

#### Ways to decrease costs (n=102 responses)

The predominant response was to study the City's finances and cut extra spending. A number of respondents suggested combining police and fire services with other local municipalities, or contracting out services. Yet many pleaded specifically to put more police on the streets or to not cut the force. Overall, it seems like respondents want to know more about budgets and planning, and often don't understand how the revenue base is inadequate, with all the development happening in the area.

# **Suggestions for Services the City Should Provide**

• Are there services the City currently doesn't provide that we should provide? Suggestions that stood out included youth, adult and senior programs and online billing. Additionally, citizens would like to see: more restaurant options and more grocery store options. A number of complaints related to the quality and cost of solid waste services provided and many people mentioned that they'd like to see more recycling options.

"I have heard that the City of Snoqualmie is the fast growing city in the state of WA. Why don't we have more businesses come into city of Snoqualmie to make it a self contained

community? More banks, more grocery stores, more gas station, more fast food. This way people don't have to drive 24 miles (round trip) to Issaquah for each and every thing."

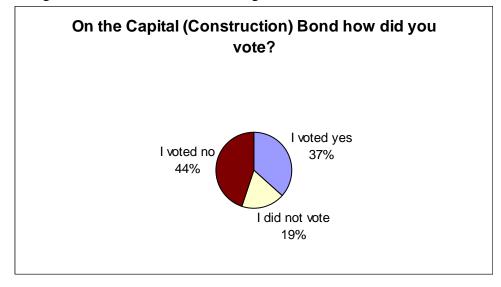
# **Additional Suggestions or Requests for City Council**

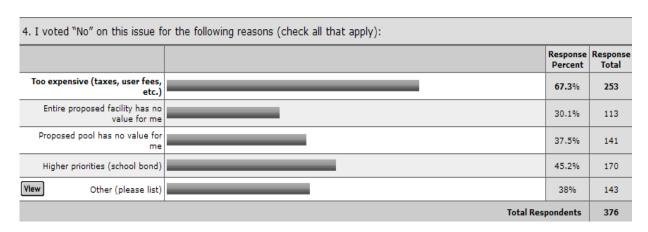
Citizens provided over 250 specific suggestions to the City Council, and reading those comments is highly recommended. Here is a breakdown of the general groups of suggestions:

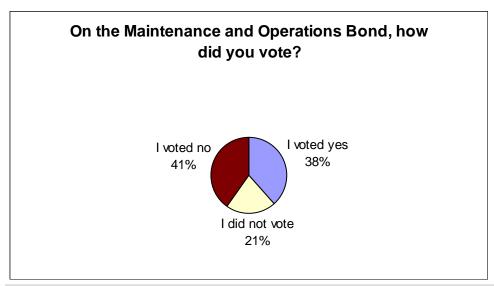
- The Ridge and Snoqualmie can seem like two different communities many comments related to "build the community into one" or "split the communities into two."
- Be forward thinking about planned growth a lot of ideas on how to preserve the natural environment, build an attractive and economically thriving downtown area, develop smart in our natural environment.
- People want to hear more about how to stay informed and get involved / volunteer in the city, and would like more information and communications (putting city council meetings on television, newsletters, etc.)
- Residents want to see teens occupied, and activities for seniors.
- Concerns about flooding, flood plain.
- A lot of suggestions on re-painting traffic lines after the winter.
- Other suggestions included adding a dog park, including return envelopes with the City water bill, and establishing a park and ride.
- Many expressed thanks for surveying and listening to citizen input.

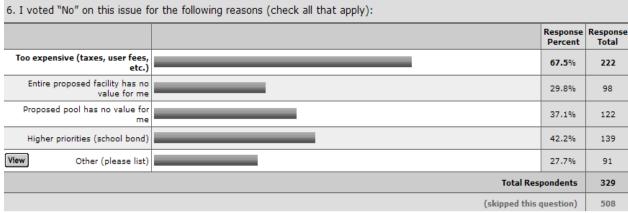
# Survey Feedback on Community Center Bond Measure Voting

Survey respondents were asked to recall voting on the proposed Community Center in 2006, including both a Capital Bond (Construction) and Maintenance & Operations Bond. They report voting as follows and for the following reasons:







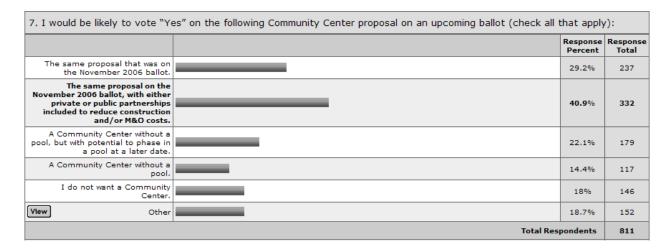


# **Future Voting on a Community Center**

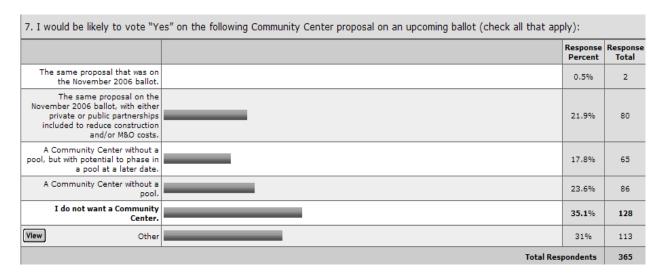
While many people would support a community center, many comments in all areas of the survey expressed concern that they don't want it, have tired of being asked about it, and resent the idea of voting on the same measure again. This is a real frustration and flashpoint for citizens, at least when they're asked about it in a survey.

But for those who might change their minds, I'd say having a solid clear plan that's extremely well-communicated will be critical to success. Residents especially want to know about the

financial sustainability of the community center. And ANY cost savings/ cost sharing or public/private partnerships would be welcomed by resisters, as would possible user fees.



For those people who voted no on either of the bond measures, the picture is slightly different:



## Recommendations

- Continue to survey Snoqualmie's citizens on a regular basis. The information provided is
  a treasure trove of ideas and feedback, and residents very much appreciate having their
  input solicited. The response rate for this survey was phenomenal, especially considering
  how extensive the survey was. The thoughtfulness with which most residents approached
  the survey was truly remarkable, with extensive constructive suggestions and detailed
  feedback for the City Council.
- Make sure that the results of the survey are shared publicly and widely to build trust that citizens are being heard, and that the time they spend providing feedback is valued.
- Celebrate the achievements of your emergency service providers over 90% of those expressing an opinion think they're doing a great job!

- Celebrate how well the City is providing services in the majority of service areas. In all but 5 of 35 areas, more than half of all respondents report the services are "good" or "excellent" and in about half of the measures, over 70% rate the services as "good" or excellent."
- Study the areas that are rated poorly and don't be afraid to pursue the hard issues that came up in the survey related to development and growth.
- Study the individual comments, suggestions and recommendations there are some wonderful ideas, and much feedback about what drives satisfaction with the City and what citizens think would build a more vibrant economy and community.
- Given that 98% of the survey respondents have email at home, consider switching over to an online survey with unique identifiers next time. It would reduce the cost of entering surveys into a software package, and eliminate most data entry errors.